

and who is reading his stories. While he has become a familiar face here in Washington, he has stayed committed to the people of Detroit and southeastern Michigan.

His many accomplishments serve as a lasting example of excellence in journalism. Michigan has been well-served by Dick Ryan, his insight and knowledge of Michigan politics will be deeply missed.

I would like to thank Dick for his dedicated service both to the Detroit News and the Michigan Community. As he enters his retirement years, I would ask that my colleagues join with Deborah and I to wish him and his wife, Dorothy, a very happy, healthy and relaxing future.

**PAYING TRIBUTE TO RICHARD  
RYAN ON HIS RETIREMENT**

**HON. MIKE ROGERS**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 8, 2006*

Mr. ROGERS of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the accomplishments of Richard (Dick) Ryan on his retirement from the Detroit News where he has spent nearly 40 years reporting on Washington, writing about Presidents, politics and the people who make this Nation tick.

For the people of Michigan, Dick Ryan was the observer and scribe of many of America's most momentous national events, and many with international impact.

Dick was there when President Reagan called on Gorbachev to "tear down" the Berlin Wall, and when President Nixon stepped down and Michigan's own, Gerald R. Ford, was sworn in as President of the United States.

It was through Dick's eyes and with his words that Detroit News readers learned about more than 36 years of Presidential political campaigns, the visits of world leaders to the White House, America's part in world events, including the peace agreement signed at Camp David in the late 1970s, and of the demise of one President under impeachment and the survival of impeachment by another.

Highly respected by his readers and his peers, Dick leaves the Detroit News with a legacy that is unparalleled. His time as, in his own words, "an eyewitness to history," is a remarkable record.

Dick Ryan's years of service to his readers and our Nation are legendary and we wish him well as he undertakes a new mission: retirement, enjoyment of his family, and an opportunity to write at his leisure.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Richard (Dick) Ryan as he begins this new adventure in life. He is truly deserving of our respect and admiration.

**HONORING DETROIT NEWS SENIOR  
WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT  
RICHARD A. RYAN UPON HIS RE-  
TIREMENT**

**HON. PETER HOEKSTRA**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 8, 2006*

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor The Detroit News Senior Washington

Correspondent, Richard A. Ryan upon his retirement.

Dick Ryan is a dedicated professional who devoted his career to journalism, beginning with the Muskegon Chronicle, a daily newspaper located in Michigan's Second Congressional District.

Dick Ryan went on to acquire nearly four decades of experience with The Detroit News, including serving 37 years in the Washington bureau as a correspondent.

His reporting on public policy and politics includes covering Congress, the U.S. Supreme Court, multiple foreign assignments and seven Presidencies beginning with President Richard Nixon.

He witnessed firsthand President Ronald Reagan's speech in 1987 at Brandenburg Gate that two years later led to the fall of the Berlin Wall, as well as Egyptian leader Anwar Sadat's historic journey to Jerusalem in 1977 to initiate a peace process.

Dick Ryan's peers have recognized his accomplishments and dedication by appointing him to such positions as president of the National Press Club and president of the legendary Gridiron Club.

Mr. Speaker, please let it be known on this eighth day of February in 2006, that the U.S. House of Representatives acknowledges the contributions and achievements of Dick Ryan and wishes him well upon his retirement.

**A VOTE FOR MERCHANT  
MARINERS**

**HON. BOB FILNER**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 8, 2006*

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, my bill, H.R. 23, the "Belated Thank You to the Merchant Mariners of World War II Act" will correct the injustice that has been inflicted on a group of World War II veterans, the World War II United States Merchant Marines.

Senator LARRY CRAIG has posted on his Web site his views of S. 1272, the Senate companion bill to H.R. 23. His views have been addressed by the co-chairs of the Just Compensation Committee of the U.S. Merchant Marine Combat Veterans. They have requested that the Senator's views and their letter be placed into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

What is Senator Craig's position on S. 1272?

Without question, the service provided by members of the U.S. Merchant Marine was invaluable to America's victory over the Axis powers during World War II. Merchant Mariners in oceangoing missions served alongside active components of the Armed Forces as they braved the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans to deliver vital supplies and manpower to the warfront. Undaunted by their difficult missions, Merchant Mariners suffered heavy casualties from enemy naval forces and land-to-sea artillery fire. To all members of the U.S. Merchant Marine who put themselves in harm's way, I say "thank you" for your service.

Civilian groups like the U.S. Merchant Marine have frequently performed the equivalent of military service throughout our nation's history. In recognition of that fact, Congress, through the enactment of Public Law 95-202 (established in 1977), a process by

which civilian groups could be recognized for their service and be classified as "veterans" for purposes of all benefits administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The Secretary of the Air Force was chosen to be the Executive Agent of the Defense Department in making decisions about granting that status. And the Air Force Secretary's decisions are informed by a review process conducted by the Civilian Military Service Review Board. Since 1977, 30 groups have been recognized as having attained veteran status. In 1988, members of the U.S. Merchant Marine who served between December 7, 1941 and August 15, 1945 were recognized.

The criteria for having civilian service equated with military service are necessarily stringent. That is as it should be; we should never water down what it means to be a veteran of the United States Armed Forces.

With that perspective in mind, I turn now to the merits of S. 1272. S. 1272, among other things, would entitle certain members of the U.S. Merchant Marine (or, if deceased, their surviving spouses) who served between December 7, 1941 and December 31, 1946, to a \$1,000 monthly payment. The \$1,000 monthly payment would be in addition to any other VA benefits. The following are the reasons why I do not support S. 1272:

(1) The cost of S. 1272 is considerable. Senate rules would require the Committee to identify offsets for the new entitlement spending. Assuming that just 3,000 Merchant Mariners and surviving spouses are alive today (the lowest estimate I have heard), the Committee would have to find \$36 million of offsets in the first year alone. And the Committee would be limited to finding those offsets within other veterans' benefits programs and services, a task that I and other Senators undertake only under extraordinary circumstances.

(2) The precedent set by enacting S. 1272 would likely result in additional spending. For example, the Congress would have very little justification to not extend the same \$1,000 monthly payment to the 29 other groups who have been recognized since 1977 as having attained veteran status. Furthermore, Congress has often granted benefits to veterans long after their service. For example, Congress did not establish presumptions of service-connection for Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange until 20 years after the herbicide spraying had ceased. S. 1272 might create an expectation that retroactive payments for these, and other veterans is owed.

(3) While service in the U.S. Merchant Marine during World War II was extremely dangerous, there is little precedent for conferring a VA benefit (on top of all other benefits) on the basis of casualty rates, danger of duty, or acts of gallantry. Only Medal of Honor recipients receive such a payment. To use a similar justification to award Merchant Mariners a \$1,000 monthly payment would rightly lead to claims from others who served no less valiantly than they.

(4) As previously mentioned, members of the U.S. Merchant Marine who were in active oceangoing service between December 7, 1941 to August 15, 1945 are already veterans, entitled to full veterans' benefits from VA. However, S. 1272 would confer a veterans' benefit on individuals who served (in addition to the dates above) between August 16, 1945 and December 31, 1946. In effect, the bill seeks to grant a veteran's benefit to individuals who are not veterans.

For all of these reasons, I cannot support S. 1272. I want to make clear however, that my opposition to S. 1272 does not mean that I do not share a profound respect for the service rendered to the country by members